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Atari Online News, Etc.
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->From the Editor's Keyboard

"Saying it like it is!"

"-----"

Happy New Years 2003! Well, another tumultuous year has come and gone. It was a miserable year for the tech world; and who knows what lies ahead for this year. Certainly it will be tough to outdo the likes of Enron, WorldCom, and the Microsoft antitrust fiasco. But today, anything is possible!

It's been a nice quiet week for a vacation. Watched some movies on the new big-screen TV - what a difference! The new roll top desk is getting more organized, and is a pleasure to use. Spent New Year's Eve at home, as usual, with a few drinks to bring in the new year. Dick Clark is finally starting to show his age! The weather hasn't been great, but bearable. It seems that the last three holidays have been marked by some sort of a storm around here. Snow, rain, and sleet - oh my!

Here we are, in our fifth year of putting out A-ONE. I know I've mentioned it a few times over the past few weeks, but it's still hard to believe. Thinking back, I've been using Atari computers for over 15 years now. Although PCs have taken over the bulk of my use, the Falcon still gets a daily workout. I still have my first 520 ST, and a bunch of machines in-between. Like many of you, I wish that Atari was still around, and keeping up with the world of computers. But, we all know that story! I have always wondered, "what if?" We'll never know. I've also been thinking back about the old WAACE and Connecticut Atarifests of yesteryear. Boy, those were a lot of fun. People like J.D. Barnes and Brian Gockley were terrific in putting those shows together, with a lot of help! Driving down to Reston, Virginia or somewhere in Connecticut was a blast. Spending a weekend among a ton of Atari enthusiasts was terrific. The people: the fans, developers, and other vendors was like being in a community - if only for a weekend. You never see shows like that anymore, then or now. I guess Atari users were, and perhaps, still are, a unique bunch of people.

Until next time...

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Hi all,

In the eleventh hour of this year there is now a new version of the ICQ-clone for Atari GEM available. The most noticeable addition to the new version is the ability to keep messages in separate text buffers/channels.

In previous versions of AtarICQ, all messages have been coming into the same buffer, in some cases making it hard to keep track of who said what. Especially when talking to several people at a time)

Another thing you might notice, is that when a message is received from a contact marked as offline, this contact will be moved to the top of the offline contacts in list.

To download the new version and read about all the other changes in the program, please visit the AtarICQ homepage:

<http://aicq.atari-users.net>

Regards,

Joakim

Sources for Free GEM Updated

Free GEM is a small utility (originally by Kellis) that is designed to present the current RAM statistics in a GEM window. The sources have recently been updated with the following changes:

- * Only creating 1 window handle at a time
- * Use of WIND_CALC to determine windows work area (Instead of assuming certain window border width)
- * Speeded up redraws of the RAM indicator (a lot)
- * Free GEM is now completely idle when window is shaded
- * Free GEM will now also detect real window shading, and enter the idle mode

The new sources+binaries can be downloaded from The Orphaned Projects Page:

<http://topp.atari-users.net>

-Maybe you're interested in maintaining future versions of this tool?
(written in GFA basic)

Hatari, Version 0.25

Version 0.25 of the Atari ST emulator Hatari has been released. In this version the support for big endian systems like PowerPC machines has been improved, especially the Spectrum 512 pictures are now working better there. Hatari now also compiles and runs on Mac OS X. Additionally the

blitter chip is now being emulated, too, and there is also support for big VDI screen resolutions. And finally, you can now save YM and WAV sounds.

<http://hatari.sourceforge.net/>

New Version of WriteAtr Available

I've uploaded a new version of WriteAtr (V0.92a) to my homepage
<http://www.horus.com/~hias/atari/>

This version fixes a bug in the handling of 720k 3.5" disks in XF551 mode. Due to this bug only the first 180k of the disk were read / written. Other modes were not affected.

so long,

Hias

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PEOPLE ARE TALKING
compiled by Joe Mirando
joe@atarinews.org

Hidi ho friends and neighbors. Well, we're into 2003 and Mother Nature is still messing with us here in the northeast. This is entirely unofficial, but I think we've gotten more snow already this season than we have in the last TWO years. I like snow. I really do. It makes everything look clean and fresh. At least until the plows and sand trucks leave a sloppy, slushy mess. But for those few hours... or even minutes... everything looks like a Christmas card.

There are probably people reading this in less temperate climates where snow is more common that are thinking, "Yeah? C'mon over here and deal with it." And they're right. It's one of those things that I can afford to like, because I don't have to deal with it on a constant basis. That's one of the nice things about living here in the northeast. We get a little bit of everything. Summers are hot, winters are cold, and spring and fall remind us that things always change.

Remember that ancient chinese curse? The one that says "May you live in interesting times"? Well friends, we've been cursed. I'm going to assume that you've heard about the company that claims to have successfully cloned a human being. In the midst of all the noise that's been generated about it, I've got to say that I'm torn.

On the one hand, I believe that it's much too early for us to try cloning a human. The possible health problems alone should have been enough reason to do more research before attempting to clone a human. Add the philosophical implications to the mix, and it should have been a witch's

cauldron hot enough to keep anyone away.

On the other hand, if handled correctly, there's probably a lot we can learn from "Eve" ... and not all of it scientific.

Unfortunately, this little girl is probably going to grow up being poked and prodded with all manner of medical instruments. It's my sincere hope that she is able to find a certain amount of peace and privacy.

Of course, the jury is still out on whether or not she actually IS a clone. The experts are feverishly comparing her DNA to her mother's even as I type this. Even if it turns out that this has been a hoax of some sort, any properly equipped company will now seriously consider whether or not to try to produce a human clone. I shudder at the thought. I don't really know why, but I do.

You'll notice that I've not mentioned the religious beliefs of the people behind this company, and that's deliberate. I firmly believe that a person's religion or belief system should be left alone. Everyone should have an equal right to be... wrong. Beliefs are just that... beliefs. And every time that religious beliefs come into play, things get out of hand. For me, it's enough that I believe something. It's enough that YOU believe something. As long as you don't believe that someone else should be harmed or discriminated against because of what they believe, we'll get along fine. The first casualties are always truth and honor. Let's not go there, huh?

Well, let's get to the news, hints, tips, and info available from the UseNet.

From the comp.sys.atari.st NewsGroup
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Carey Christenson asks about AtariICQ (I Seek You):

"Has anyone ever gotten sounds to work on Atari ICQ with a Falcon030 setup??? Got ICQ to work with IConnect very nice. But need it to play a sound when I am away from the computer to tell me someone has come online or someone has messaged me!!!!"

Mark Duckworth tells Carey:

"Far as I can tell, the problem is that sound support is not yet implemented."

Brian Roland tells Carey and Mark:

"Yes, it does work...
You'll have to set it up by hand with a text editor.
See the readme files..."

You'll either need an avserver with something like gemjing, or the STe/DMA bios extensions (for mint?)."

Boudewijn Rempt asks about converting Papyrus documents:

"I've inherited an insane mountain of Papyrus documents, and I need to convert them to something sensible, like plain text. I no longer have access to Papyrus, or even to an ST, so I

have started writing a conversion filter. One problem is that I don't have any documentation on the Papyrus file format.

Does anyone know whether a description is available somewhere?"

Jos van de Gruiter tells Boudewijn:

"I think it's a bit unnecessary to write a conversion filter, since you can download a papyrus demo for pc. Read all your Atari files and convert them with Papyrus PC to Word/RTF/TXT/HTML docs.
http://www.rom-logicware.com/e_demos.htm"

Boudewijn replies"

"Thanks! I've downloaded it right away. Now I only have to find a PC that runs Windows, because the installer doesn't work with wine... But this should be a great help."

Ken Springer posts this about Linux and ARAnyM:

"Having read hear about ARAnyM, I've gotten interested in learning something about Linux.

Long ago, I learned that it was a command line OS like DOS, but some work was being done on a graphical user interface. I have no idea where this all stands when it comes to the Atari platform. Is there a website that covers this?

I've learned there are at least 2 "flavors" of Linux, GNU and Debian.

My thoughts right now is to do this on my PC or Power Mac, possibly both. There seems to be 3 major Linux versions, Lindows, Red Hat, and Mandrake. There may be more."

Johan Klockars tells Ken:

"To begin with, Unix (of which Linux is one variant) is next to nothing like DOS, fortunately. Unlike DOS, it actually is an operating system, where DOS is little but a program launcher and function library (just like TOS).

Anyway, originally Unix was mainly used from the command line using any of a number of command interpreters (shells). Since this was in the early 1970's, there's nothing strange about that.

Of course, not everything is easily done with a text only interface, so various graphical interfaces were implemented by workstation manufacturers and universities. Since the mid 1980's or so, the dominant one has been the X Window System. That's what you'll find, in various variants, in just about all (non-embedded) Unix systems with a display capable of graphics.

Note that X itself is not really a GUI. It only provides the facilities to implement GUI's. On top of X you have for example GUI libraries like Motif, Qt and Gtk, as well as desktop environments and window managers like KDE, Gnome etc.

While there are Unix variants that have been ported to the Atari machine (there's Linux and at least one of the BSD's, and Atari themselves had SystemV Release 4 ported, IIRC), you probably don't want to run those

unless you have a seriously upgraded machine.

GNU (GNU's Not Unix) is a free (as in speech) software project to create a complete non-proprietary operating system. You'll find lots of GNU stuff in any Linux distribution, as well as probably in many of the other Unix variants.

Debian is just one of the many available Linux distributions, which uses lots and lots of GNU software just like the others.

My ARAnyM has never been anywhere near the Debian distribution, so I'm not sure what you are referring to. Possibly some of the other people who work on ARAnyM have Debian installed.

Anyway, which distribution you use should be completely irrelevant.

Since the ARAnyM JIT compiler only works on x86 CPU's, it will be a lot (like perhaps dozens of times) faster at running Atari software on the PC than the PowerMac (somewhat depending on what CPU's the machines have, obviously).

I don't think Lindows even existed a year ago, so I wouldn't call it major. RedHat and Mandrake are among the major ones, though, as are SuSE (my favourite) and Debian.

As long as you have the relevant libraries, the distribution is completely irrelevant. And the libraries can always be installed later if they are not included by default in whatever distribution you choose."

Sean Kelley asks about a C compiler for Atari:

"Can anyone recommend a good C compiler for the Falcon? If so where can it be purchased?

I'm not interested in a cross compiler under Linux on a PC.

If I install EasyMint along with some of the standard packages, does that include a native gcc?"

'DOCs' tells Sean:

"You can download this GCC toolkit, but in french

http://gemtos.free.fr/ouils/kit_gcc.zip "

John Garone asks about using HD Driver with one of my all-time favorite games:

"I've recently re-installed HDDriver 8.04 and Doom crashes although all else seems to be working ok (including much faster booting). No biggie to use ICD again for Doom but I was wondering if there is a setting in HDDriver I could change to make things more convenient. Note that this is on a Falcon running single TOS 4.04."

Dr. Uwe Seimet tells John:

"I don't think there is any setting that can influence Doom or any other kind of software. Is there any difference in your driver configuration after re-installing HDDRIVER? If I understand you correctly everything

was working fine before the re-installation."

William Wong asks about an alternative desktop and XAAES:

"I was trying to auto start Teradesk from XAAES. I edited xa_exec.scl to include the path to Teradesk in the 'desk' keyword. However, when it tries to run, a popup dialog comes up & notify that it cannot find the system rsc file. How do I set the startup directory to that of Teradesk??"

Martin Tarenskeen tells William:

"Strange. I've never seen this problem on my system. Are you sure cicons.rsc and desktop.rsc are there? Can you start desktop.prg manually from xaaes's "start" menu? What exactly did you put in your xa_exec.scl file?"

William tells Martin:

"OK, problem solved. Some how I renamed that cicon.rsc file to icon.rsc to get it to load colour icons in tos. Moving to XAAES, it seems to look for cicon.rsc, which after i rename it works."

Well folks, that's it for this week. I know it's a little shorter than usual, but I figured that with the holidays having just gone by, you'd have other things to do. 'Till next week, make sure you listen to what they are saying when...

PEOPLE ARE TALKING

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->In This Week's Gaming Section - 'Metroid Prime' Takes Year's Honors!

'Monopoly' Free-for-All!
New Consoles for 2003?!
And more!

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->A-ONE's Game Console Industry News - The Latest Gaming News!

'Metroid Prime' Takes Wide Game of Year Honors

It's a dark game, featuring lots of action, lots of suspense -- and a woman in one ferocious-looking spacesuit.

As 2002 winds down, editors of video game publications across the country are compiling their "best of" lists, and two of the top game sites on the Internet agreed last week that Nintendo Co. Ltd.'s long-awaited "Metroid

Prime," for the company's own GameCube console, is Game of the Year.

Both GameSpot, a division of CNET Networks Inc., and GameSpy named "Metroid," a first-person action game, as their pick for top title.

"Metroid" was released in November and was the No. 2 title for the month in the United States, based on units sold, according to market research service NPDFunworld.

Buzz grew around the game, which features the female adventurer Samus Aran, after a strong showing at E3, the industry's annual trade show, in Los Angeles in May. It is the latest in a franchise that stretches back to the original Metroid game on Nintendo's 1980s NES console.

"What nobody was prepared for was (a) game so amazing that it redefined what a first-person console game could be," GameSpy said in its awards roundup.

Though a number of leading video game publishers have warned in recent weeks of weaker-than-expected results for the holiday quarter, owing to shifting retail and consumer patterns, 2002 is still expected to be a record sales year for the U.S. game industry.

'Monopoly' Free-For-All Is More Fun

I used to think traditional Monopoly was called a board game because you needed to be really bored to play it. After all, one game could take forever, even when you have my talent for being the first to go bankrupt.

Not any more.

Infogrames has just released "Monopoly Party" (\$30 for PlayStation and Xbox, \$40 for GameCube), a high-tech version of Monopoly that cuts playing time significantly because the computer simultaneously administers the affairs of up to four players, allowing them to concentrate on making the decisions for building a financial empire.

Or, in my case, file for Chapter 7 at super speed.

Here's how it works. The computer rolls the dice for each person, moves them around the board, and then begins taking care of business. It asks if you want to buy any unclaimed property you've landed on, deducts rent money, displays a Chance card, sends you to Jail, or credits you with \$200 for passing Go. Meanwhile, it's doing the same for all the other players.

If someone doesn't want to buy a piece of property, the game waits until everyone is free and immediately puts the parcel on the auction block, giving all players a chance to bid. You get a control panel in a corner of the screen to set bid prices or issue other commands.

Once the auctioning is done, players can buy or sell homes or hotels, propose a trade or mortgage their holdings. If a player has rolled a double, such as two 5s, that player gets an extra roll of the dice.

When everyone has finished their business, the dice is rolled again.

The system helps speed up the game tremendously. But efficiency comes at a

price.

The biggest problem is that some of the screen icons are so small, they're almost impossible to see, even on a large television. Colored stars identify who owns what land, but the stars can have hard-to-discern markings on them, such as when a proposal has been made to swap land. Most of the time you don't really need to know who owns something because the computer will tell you, and add or subtract any rental fees from your total. But there were times when it would have been nice to see a list of exactly what I owned.

The system for buying and selling buildings and for mortgaging your property, also takes some getting used to. You need to maneuver across a grid that has a color-coded list of all the properties. If you are Player 2, all the properties you own will have a 2 in the grid.

To propose a trade, you have to change the designated numbers in the squares, then go to a screen that asks if you want to offer money as part of the exchange. It's the most confusing aspect of the game because it's difficult for people to see exactly what's being proposed. A tiny dot on the board shows who currently owns the property.

A lot of these problems disappear when you opt to play the original form of Monopoly, where every player takes a turn. The game focuses only on one section of the board, the markings are clear, and you can use the joystick to spin the board around and to zoom in and out, getting a bird's eye view of any area you want.

However, in the traditional version it's difficult to discern what you own and how much it's worth when you have to pay income tax. The game asks whether you would rather shell out \$200 or 10 percent of the value of your holdings. Unfortunately, there's no way to find out which would be the better deal. The game doesn't tell you what your net worth is and won't let you get to the screen where you can see the status of your properties.

The best part of "Monopoly Party" is the auctions, which take place if someone doesn't want to buy a property, or the bank forecloses and tries to sell it off. You might get a bargain, or force someone to pay an exorbitant price.

"Monopoly Party" has other nice touches, such as the animated game pieces. The little dog can be made to wave, and it lies down, dejected, if it has to pay rent. And if you go belly up, so does your dog.

Players can customize the rules to limit the number of houses and hotels, increase the salary for landing on Go, set up a jackpot that is won by landing on Free Parking and exclude players from auctions, trades and receiving rental income as long as they're in jail.

The property names can be changed to reflect places in England, Germany, France, Spain or Italy, or you can alter the whole landscape of the game, giving it a science fiction, fantasy, or prehistoric theme, or one that features ancient monuments and historical figures.

Personally, the theme doesn't matter to me. Whether I'm in outer space running around like a bug-eyed alien or lumbering across the Earth surrounded by cavemen and dinosaurs, I'm versatile enough to go bankrupt anywhere.

New Game Consoles In Play for '03

Now that the video game business has just wrapped a record year of sales, the industry's major players are preparing to unveil new products on the hardware front.

Nintendo, Sony and Microsoft all have hardware in the works that could be launched as early as May, during the annual E3 video game convention in Los Angeles.

The true next generation of hardware is pegged for a 2005 launch, with Microsoft planning Xbox Next and Sony planning PlayStation 3. But 2003 might see a portable take on GameCube and cheaper variations of Xbox and PlayStation 2, Envisioneering analyst Richard Doherty predicted.

"A portable GameCube device would bring next-generation graphics to the portable market -- a market dominated by Nintendo with no competition from Sony or Microsoft," Doherty said.

Doherty expects an Xbox 1.5 that will be cheaper to manufacture and will be a smaller, lighter version of the current Xbox. He said it will retail from \$129-\$149. Microsoft also might introduce a new combination Xbox-digital video recorder for about \$199.

Sony is on the third generation of PlayStation hardware, and the company is expected to ship its second incarnation of PS2 this year.

"I believe you'll see the price of this PS2.5 drop as low as \$99," Doherty said. And Sony is a TiVo investor, which leads Doherty and others to think there's a combination TiVo-PS2 device in the works -- possibly a \$149 add-on to "fit into the back bay of the PS2," Doherty said.

Microsoft co-founder Bill Gates, perhaps thinking that the PC market has peaked for now, and Sony, eager to expand its entertainment hardware empire, are each focused on the living room. PS2 already plays DVD movies and CDs, and Xbox now ships with DVD movie playback, an Ethernet card for broadband connectivity, a disk drive for storage and the ability to rip and listen to CDs. The next wave of hardware is expected to incorporate DVR technology, further positioning the game system as an entertainment hub.

Sony is working with IMB and Toshiba on a new chip, code-named "GRID," that will allow PS3 to connect to other consumer electronics devices and other PS3s via broadband to enhance its processing power. PS3 also is expected to ship with Ethernet connectivity and a disk drive and will feature an easier architecture for game developers to program.

Little is known about Xbox Next, other than that it will ship before PS3 and likely will include UltimateTV technology (DVR and TV Web surfing), and it could serve as a PC for the living room.

There's also the possibility that Sony and Microsoft will release two versions each of their systems: one devoted strictly to games and another with all the bells and whistles. Broadband connectivity will be at the center of all of these machines' functions.

A longtime Microsoft Corp opponent has emerged as the mystery backer and mastermind behind a contest that offers \$200,000 to anyone who successfully hacks into the software giant's Xbox video game console, a top technology news Web Site reported.

Michael Robertson, a former dot-com entrepreneur and now chief executive of U.S. software company Lindows.com, revealed himself as the anonymous donor and contest's creator in an interview on Thursday with CNET News.com.

His identity was first revealed on SourceForge, a site where developers congregate to share tips on developing so-called open-source software projects.

A Microsoft spokeswoman in London declined to comment on Robertson's bounty. No one could be immediately reached at Lindows.com's offices in San Diego, California.

Last July, Robertson anonymously dangled the prize money to any programmers who could successfully hack into the Xbox and adapt it so that it would run on the Linux operating system, an emerging competitor to Microsoft's Windows operating system.

Robertson recently extended the deadline as no group has fully mastered the challenge.

The hack contest goes beyond a sporty challenge.

Linux proponents have long charged that its freely distributed operating system, designed and modified by mainly unaffiliated groups of programming enthusiasts, is an important step for the future development of computing devices.

They argue that the market dominance of Windows, which is the operating system on more than 90 percent of all PCs, gives Microsoft and a small number of its business partners unfair and anti-competitive control in the design of the growing number of devices that come equipped with computing capabilities.

Robertson's firm Lindows.com is a start-up that aims to promote the use of the Linux open-source operating language in computer systems, a move that would challenge Microsoft's dominant Windows operating system.

The two firms are embattled in a lawsuit in Federal District Court in Seattle as Lindows.com is trying to get the Microsoft trademark on Windows invalidated. Microsoft has accused the like-sounding competitor of trademark infringement.

It is unclear whether Microsoft will resort to legal action to fight off hacker assaults on its X-Box.

Recently, U.S. companies have used the Digital Millennium Copyright Act, a U.S. law, to defend their software and technology products from hackers, a move that has met with mixed results in the courts.

"There is no business justification; that's not why I did it," Robertson told News.com of his rationale behind the contest. "I did it because I thought people should have the choice to run the software they want on the hardware of their choice."

Robertson said that Xbox is designed much like a PC with a closed operating system run on Intel microprocessors. He argues that as it has done with PCs, Microsoft is trying to make its software the defacto operating system in gaming consoles.

"I think Xbox sets a dangerous precedent," he told CNET News.com.

The Robertson revelation generated mixed impressions among SourceForge users. While some used the SourceForge message boards to cheer Robertson's push to take on Microsoft, others saw it as a half-hearted publicity stunt that would fail to result in a successful adaptation of the console.

"Not much to see here but a promised roadkill," one posting read.

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A-ONE's Headline News
The Latest in Computer Technology News
Compiled by: Dana P. Jacobson

High Court Urged to Settle DVD Dispute

The Supreme Court has temporarily intervened in a fight over DVD copying, and the justices could eventually use the case to decide how easy it will be for people to post software on the Internet that helps others copy movies.

More broadly, the case - against a webmaster whose site offered a program to break DVD security codes - could resolve how people can be sued for what they put online.

Justice Sandra Day O'Connor granted a stay last week to a group that licenses DVD encryption software to the motion picture industry, giving the court time to collect more arguments. She requested filings by later this week. The group has spent three years trying to stop illegal copying.

The case puts the court in the middle of a cyberspace legal boundary fight: Where can lawsuits involving the World Wide Web be filed?

Consumers' rights are pitted against industry copyright protection, with billions of dollars at stake, said Tim Bajarin, president of Creative Strategies Inc., a Silicon Valley consulting firm.

"All of us have felt this was going to be forced up the legal chain," he said.

The DVD industry wants the Supreme Court to use its case against a former webmaster to clarify where lawsuits can be filed.

New York technology analyst Richard Doherty said companies have delayed many new products, services and forms of entertainment because of the DVD industry's problems.

"The future of digital delivery has been on hold ever since this case first came," said Doherty, head of The Envisioneering Group. "They need to know it's going to be protected, it's not going to be ripped off seven seconds after being put on the Internet."

The issue of Internet jurisdiction has come up in Australia, where that country's highest court ruled recently that a businessman could sue for defamation over an article published in the United States and posted on the Internet.

The California Supreme Court ruled in November that the former webmaster, Matthew Pavlovich, cannot be sued for trade secret infringement in California. Justices said he could be sued in his home state of Texas, or in Indiana, where he was a college student when codes that allowed people to copy DVDs were posted on his Web site in 1999.

The program was written by a teenager in Norway and is just one of many easily available programs that can break DVD security codes.

The ruling by a divided California court makes it harder for the industry to pursue people who use the Internet to share copyrighted material.

Pavlovich's attorney, Allonn Levy, said Monday that a group should not be allowed to "drag a student who's involved with a Web site into a forum that's halfway across the country." He said the case affects all people who use the Internet and businesses with sites on the Internet.

The California-based DVD Copy Control Association argued that California was the proper venue because of the movie industry's presence in that state. Lawyers for the association told the Supreme Court that the stay was needed to keep Pavlovich from reposting the decryption program on the Internet.

Judge Halts Domain Deception

Internet domain name registrar Register.com last week won a preliminary injunction against a reseller of domain name registrations that it accuses of deceiving Register.com customers into transferring their registrations.

A U.S. federal judge last Thursday granted a preliminary injunction against Domain Registry of America to block it from using alleged marketing tactics that Register.com said are deceptive, Register.com said Monday. The injunction, following a motion filed by Register.com in September, indicates there is a strong likelihood Register.com will prevail in its lawsuit, said Brett Lewis, assistant general counsel at Register.com.

DROA, which according to the injunction is based in Markham, Ontario, is a reseller of domain-name registration services by eNom, which is not named in the suit. The judge did not take action against registration companies for Canada, Europe, and Australia that appear to be affiliated with DROA and are named in the suit, saying her court doesn't have jurisdiction. Register.com is a large registrar based in New York.

The case involves alleged domain-name registrar "slamming", which is similar to a tactic in which telecommunications carriers lead competitors' customers to switch their long-distance service through deceptive

practices. In this case, Register.com alleges DROA tried to make domain name holders believe their registration provider was DROA when it wasn't, and said DROA was affiliated with Register.com.

DROA sent confusing mailings to customers of Register.com about renewing domain registrations that were soon to expire, Lewis said. Customers who called DROA were told the company was affiliated with, had merged with, or was part of the same company as Register.com, he added. The company also used Register.com's name on one of its Web pages, he said. Register.com found out about those practices from its customers beginning in February, but the tactics probably began in December 2001, Lewis said.

Among other things, the preliminary injunction imposed by Judge Naomi Reice Buchwald of the U.S. District Court for the Southern District of New York orders DROA not do to anything "calculated to or likely to cause third parties to believe that DROA is their existing Internet domain name registrar or registration service provider if that is not in fact the case" and not to do anything that would make third parties think its services are associated with or endorsed by Register.com.

With the preliminary injunction in place pending a final judgment, the case now moves on to determining the merits of Register.com's claims.

"We hope to hit them for a substantial amount of damages" in the millions of dollars, Register.com's Lewis said. "We want to recoup not only what we feel we've lost in terms of business... more important is the hearts of our customers," he added.

As for domain name owners who believe they have been misled into transferring their registrations, Lewis advised them to contact DROA to request that the transaction be undone and their money refunded. If DROA is not receptive, they should contact Register.com.

Some former Register.com customers also may have transferred their registrations by choice, he acknowledged.

"It's possible there were people who understood what they were doing," Lewis said. "It's never about those people."

L.A. Official Calls for Probe of Internet Cafes

A Los Angeles city councilman has called for an investigation of violence at so-called Internet cafes, a step that could prompt a crackdown on the popular and controversial sites for PC-based games.

The investigation of the cybercafes, also known as "PC bangs," came after a brawl erupted between rival groups playing in a tournament involving the online combat game "Counter Strike."

Los Angeles City Councilman Dennis Zine plans to introduce a motion at a hearing next week asking for a report from the Los Angeles Police Department on recent outbreaks of violence at cybercafes, a representative said on Thursday.

One unidentified teenager was shot in the leg on Monday outside an Internet cafe in Northridge, north of Los Angeles. A second youth was struck in the head, reportedly with a chair.

About 100 people had gathered at the NetStreet Internet Cafe at the time of the melee, with witnesses reporting that fighters had wielded metal chairs and pipes. In July a 19-year-old man was shot and killed outside his home as he returned from a gaming session at NetStreet.

In the Orange County city of Garden Grove, south of Los Angeles, police have reportedly been called to the city's cybercafes more than 300 times since June. A city ordinance requires the facilities to post security guards at night.

Much of the violence at Orange County cybercafes has been blamed on Asian gang disputes. The Northridge brawl is also being investigated by a Los Angeles police unit that investigates Asian gang-related crimes.

Zine has said he was concerned that Internet cafes featuring violent games had become unsafe for the minors who frequent them and raised the prospect of imposing an age restriction on the businesses.

Los Angeles already regulates traditional gaming arcades, requiring them to get annual police permits to operate and charging them a fee when they move.

An aide to Zine said on Thursday that his proposals would depend on the findings in that police report.

"Counter-Strike," marketed by a unit of Vivendi Universal, is a popular game often featured in competitive gaming events, including tournaments run by the Cyberathlete Professional League that features hundreds of thousands of dollars in prize money.

It carries a "Mature" rating as assigned by the Entertainment Software Rating Board, which means that it is not intended for those under the age of 17.

In late 2001, the U.S. Supreme Court let stand a lower-court ruling blocking a law enacted by the city of Indianapolis that would have required parental consent for minors to play violent video games in commercial establishments like arcades.

Hands On With the Dual 1.25GHz Power Mac

When Apple last updated their professional line of Power Macs they added more than just a faster processor, the company also changed the architecture of machines. While the form factor of the Power Mac G4 basically remained the same, the machines did get a small facelift.

The dual 1.25GHz Power Mac features Xserve architecture with support for up to 2GB of Double Data Rate (DDR) memory at up to 333 MHz, an ATI Radeon 9000 Pro graphics card (you can custom order the Nvidia GeForce4 MX card or the NVIDIA GeForce4 Titanium) and support for storage up to nearly half a terabyte.

The first thing I noticed when booting the dual 1.25GHz was the incredible amount of noise it made. I have really never heard anything like it before coming from a desktop computer -- it sounded more like a rackmount server than a pro system.

Once the system started up the excessive noise went away and the computer settled in to reasonable hum in the background. With the release of a firmware update in late November, Apple took care of the excessive startup noise leaving the system at the same steady hum all the time.

I say that the noise level is reasonable, but to be honest I don't notice the hum of the computer at all. I don't find it any noisier than the previous generation 1GHz machines -- I think it's what you get used to. The people that may notice an increased level of noise will be those upgrading from systems two generations ago.

The other thing I noticed when booting the dual 1.25GHz was the speed with which it started. Even with a 25 percent processor increase, I was surprised how fast the machine booted up.

While the increased speed carried over into working with applications, the biggest difference I found was starting Classic in Mac OS X. Whether it's the speed of the CPU, refinements in the Classic layer or a combination of the two, I have never seen Classic start up so quick.

The dual 1.25GHz comes standard with a 120GB hard drive, 512MB RAM, a SuperDrive and Mac OS X 10.2 Jaguar. With the included iApps like iMovie and iDVD it doesn't take long to turn your desktop computer into a movie-making workstation.

Of course, if you want to take your movie making skills to the next level you could purchase DVD Studio Pro and Final Cut Pro. I would definitely recommend more RAM if you plan to tackle these applications, but the standard configuration works just fine if you plan to stay with the included iApps.

In benchmark tests recently published by our sister publication Macworld magazine, the 1.25GHz machine outshone all other Apple competitors, which makes sense given the higher processor speed. But the new architecture of the current systems didn't seem to help the dual 1GHz past the previous generation dual 1GHz machine.

The computer also comes with 2 FireWire ports and 2 USB ports (with another two on the included pro keyboard). The systems also have a 256K on-chip level 2 cache and 2MB of DDR SRAM backside level 3 cache per processor, which greatly helps out with speed.

While Apple's pro machines come equipped with a Gigabit Ethernet port, they don't include an AirPort wireless card. I think if you are going to spend US\$3,300 for a computer it should support all of the most current technologies out of the box.

Given Apple's commitment to Bluetooth, I would also like to see built-in Bluetooth on their hardware. Using a D-Link Bluetooth adapter wasn't a big problem for me, but I don't use very many USB devices so using a port didn't bother me.

Apple's included mouse and keyboard are cool looking, but I can't remember the last time I used an Apple optical mouse. For years I have used a four-button mouse with a scroll wheel to simplify many of the repetitive tasks and surfing the Internet, immediately tossing aside the Apple mouse.

Overall, the dual 1.25GHz Power Mac is definitely a winner, combining speed and architecture to produce the fastest Macintosh to date. The dual 1.25GHz

may find its biggest competitor to be the recently released Titanium PowerBook 1GHz.

Apple Launches iSync Platform

Apple rang in the new year with the commercial launch of its iSync 1.0 software, enabling synchronization of personal information management (PIM) applications among Mac computers and an array of devices, including mobile phones and PDAs.

The software works seamlessly with the Mac OS X version 10.2 address book and Apple's iCal application, linking contacts and calendars from Mac computers to Bluetooth-enabled mobile phones, Palm OS handhelds, Apple's iPod portable digital music player and other Macs via the company's .Mac service.

Essentially, the iSync software platform adds mobile phones to Apple's digital hub strategy, said Joe Hayashi, director of product marketing for Apple's applications group.

In addition to linking computers with handhelds, iSync lets users move data over the Internet to multiple Mac machines simultaneously, Hayashi told NewsFactor, using either wired or wireless connections like Wi-Fi, for example. The software also features SMS (short message service) capabilities for accessing and responding to communications from various devices.

Apple has partnered with U.S. carrier Cingular Wireless, through the carrier's Internet Express Network, and phone manufacturer Sony Ericsson in developing the "Mac to Mobile" platform. It is supported by a half-dozen Sony Ericsson models, including the T68i, as well as by the Palm Tungsten, Zire and M-series PDAs, the Handspring Treo and Visor handhelds, and Sony's Clie.

Apple is tightening the integration between mobile devices and the OS X operating system and recognizes the growing demand for mobile and wireless access to PIM applications, IDC analyst Alex Slawsby told NewsFactor.

"They have to support the needs of their relatively small but loyal user base. This software is important to Apple because it drives demand for OS X and enables good linkages with their products and a variety of other devices," said Slawsby.

Microsoft already offers similar software with its ActiveSync application, and Palm provides a HotSync product that offers similar connections among PCs and handheld devices.

In a related move, Apple also unveiled iCal 1.0.1, an update to the company's PIM calendar program that enables users to manage multiple calendars and share them over the Internet. This software features a "publish and subscribe" capability so that users can put their calendars on the Web, allowing other Mac users to "subscribe" to them and view them in iCal on their own Mac.

The wireless synchronization of PIM information between PCs and handheld devices will become even more important, IDC analyst Keith Waryas told NewsFactor, with Palm and other PDA makers offering Bluetooth connectivity.

"The real payoff for Apple is down the road, with the integration of wired and wireless technology, and the gradual elimination of wired connections," Waryas said. He noted that the latest Hewlett-Packard iPAQ devices also offer Bluetooth personal networking technology.

As of this week, iSync 1.0 is available as a free download at the Apple Web site, with a .Mac account required for Mac-to-Mac synchronization.

Threat Of Yaha Virus Upgraded

Antivirus vendors are warning of a new version of the Yaha virus, W32/Yaha.m or Win32/Yaha.k. The malevolent code is spreading more rapidly than was thought it would when it was discovered Dec. 21. Monday, Network Associates Inc.'s Anti-Virus Emergency Response Team (Avert) upgraded the Yaha variant's risk assessment from "low" to "medium" because of its increased activity. Secure E-mail services firm MessageLabs is reporting that it stopped 7,377 Yaha.k infections in the past 24 hours.

According to Network Associates, the Yaha.k virus spreads primarily through E-mail, using its own E-mail engine, and the virus also tries to shut down antivirus and security-related software as it infects.

The virus uses many different subject lines, including "XXX Screensavers 4 U," "Free Demo game," and "Are you the BEST," as lures. The virus also arrives with a wide range of potential attachment file names, including "zXXX_BROWSER.EXE," "Jenna_Jemson.scr," and "FixKlez.com." More information is available at http://vil.nai.com/vil/content/v_99918.htm.

Jimmy Kuo, a Network Associates Avert fellow, says the infection rate for Yaha.k has either stabilized or increased only slightly in Europe. Kuo says the virus appears to be hitting home users harder than businesses, which are more likely to keep antivirus systems up to date and block certain attachments at their E-mail gateways. A more complete damage assessment won't be possible until after New Year's Day. "Infections will increase again for one more weekend," Kuo says. "People are still out of the office for the holidays and there will be some companies that won't see that they've been infected until employees return to work."

Opinion: Fighting Spam: Legislation Won't Work

An individual who identifies himself as an African businessman pleads for my urgent assistance. An unknown pharmaceutical company pitches me a potion it claims will enlarge one of my appendages. Someone named Amy218 offers to sell me pictures of "barely legal teens."

A weird bunch of offers, to be sure, but then I'm used to it. My e-mail inbox -- like everyone else's -- is filled with spam like this day in and day out. And it's only getting worse.

Spam has moved past its status as a minor irritant. It has grown into a force that threatens to turn our e-mail boxes into clogged cesspools of marketing offers.

Research firm Gartner estimates that junk e-mail volume has grown at least fivefold in recent years. E-marketers can buy a database of 10 million e-mail addresses for about US\$150, and replicating such a list is virtually free.

With insidious economics like this, spam will continue to grow like a weed in summer, wasting ever-increasing amounts of users' time and costing corporations a fortune in misspent resources.

The desire to stem this drowning tide of Viagra offers has created a call to action, and that's where the spam issue gets tricky. Like killing the monster in a Japanese horror movie, destroying spam seems nearly impossible.

Politicians, seeing an opportunity to grandstand, have proposed legislation: The "Controlling the Assault of Non Solicited Pornography and Marketing Act" (CAN SPAM) would require unsolicited e-mail to include a method for recipients to opt out. This bill or a variation of it will likely be voted on in 2003.

But passing anti-spam legislation, while perhaps well intended, is like passing a law against rain. Words on paper won't stop it.

First, an increasing number of spammers now operate outside U.S. shores. Will a Malaysian spam outfit quiver in fear at a U.S. law? Second, the Constitution's free speech protection says -- fortunately -- that any madman can distribute leaflets with no governmental censorship. It wouldn't take much legal maneuvering by a well-heeled spammer to point out that free speech extends to the Internet.

(Not that the Internet will ever need the U.S. Constitution to protect its free speech. For every AOL-style profanity blocker, there are a million crazies eager to sing the praises of kinky behavior with farm animals. That's the beauty of the Internet. God bless it.)

Okay, we can't wish spam away, and we can't legislate it away, so what are we to do? The only answer is to fight the monster with the same weapon it uses: technology. These technological solutions come in three forms: ISPs, e-mail software and blacklists.

Looking to ISPs to alleviate spam makes sense because they have the most to gain. If an ISP could offer customers a spam-free service -- an added expense for the business -- it would make that ISP much more attractive than its competitors.

In the meantime, e-mail software that fights spam -- an admittedly flawed solution -- is the best stopgap measure for corporations and individuals. Veteran spam fighters speak highly of Spam Assassin, and Brightmail also makes highly regarded filtering programs.

New anti-spam programs are released all the time. They require tweaking, but they can save you a couple of hours a week of deleting pyramid sales schemes.

The third technique is aggressive use of blacklists. These are lists of known Internet addresses used by spammers. You can visit Spam-Blockers.com, among others, to start using this technique. Like any junk e-mail blocker, blacklists are not a perfect solution.

While searching for the perfect spam filter, consider this fun fact:

Brightmail just reported that spam increased 20 percent for the holidays. Help!

Spam Cost U.S. Corporations \$8.9B

All those junk e-mail messages may promise instant wealth, but they can be quite painful to the bottom line.

A study to be released Monday attempts to quantify the annual cost of spam: \$8.9 billion for U.S. corporations, \$2.5 billion for European businesses and another \$500 million for U.S. and European service providers.

Marten Nelson, an analyst at Ferris Research, says that while most spam can be deleted in one second, occasionally someone is duped into clicking the message. It also takes time to track down legitimate messages mistakenly tossed by inaccurate spam filters.

Figuring it takes 4.4 seconds on average to deal with a message, the messages add up to \$4 billion in lost productivity for U.S. businesses each year.

Another \$3.7 billion comes from companies having to buy more powerful servers and more bandwidth as well as divert staff time. The rest is attributable to companies providing help-desk support to annoyed users.

The costs are less in Europe because spam isn't as big of a problem, Nelson said. But in future calculations, Nelson said he may have to add the costs of wireless spam, a growing problem in Europe as text messaging gets more popular.

Happy 20th Birthday for the Internet

Like the age of the earth or of Hollywood stars, estimates on the age of the Internet depend on whom you ask. By the calculations of one industry pioneer, this week marks the 20th birthday of the modern Internet.

On January 1, 1983, Internet-forerunner ARPANET (a system developed by the U.S. Department of Defense's Advanced Research Projects Agency) fully switched to TCP/IP. The transition came after a decade of development work on the new system, which replaced an earlier, clunkier setup, the Network Control Protocol.

Transition plans for the NCP-to-TCP/IP move were published in 1981, and some administrators began migrating soon after. But New Year's Day 1983 was the deadline, one that quite a few techies found themselves cramming for, according to Bob Braden, a member of the original ARPA research group that designed TCP.

"People sometimes question that any geeks would have been in machine rooms on January 1. Believe it!! Some geeks got very little sleep for a few days," Braden wrote in a recent post to an Internet Engineering Task Force mailing list, drawing attention to the 20th anniversary of the switch-over. "There may still be a few remaining T-shirts that read, 'I Survived the TCP/IP Transition'."

Of course, an Internet-like system was up and running long before 1983: Since 1969, researchers had been exchanging data over ARPANET, which connected hundreds of host machines at the time of the TCP/IP switch-over. But the standardization of TCP/IP laid the groundwork for today's massive, decentralized network.

Today, the U.S. government is considering recreating ARPANET, in a way. Cyberspace-security concerns have raised the suggestion of building GOVNET, a version of the Internet that would be secured for use by the federal government.

The General Services Administration is already gathering information from the U.S. telecommunications industry about developing this custom network for secure government transmissions. It would also be a TCP/IP network and - theoretically, at least - be free from hacker attacks.

Over on Slashdot.org, the Net's watercooler for tech-news discussions, a link to Braden's note prompted reminiscences as well as wisecracks. As one poster pointed out, "Just one more year, and the Internet can drink! Think of the fun we'll have then!"

Some Free-shipping Offers Not So Free

Many online shoppers are finding that offers of free shipping come at a price.

More than 90% of 1.5 million online shoppers recently surveyed by researcher BizRate.com said they paid for shipping even though about half were lured to Web sites by free-shipping offers. What's more, online holiday shipping charges rose 15% to an average \$11.70 an order from a year ago, BizRate.com says.

"In reality, many consumers paid their own freight," BizRate.com CEO Chuck Davis says. "Several (sites) had strict guidelines to qualify for free shipping."

While free-shipping restrictions aren't likely to drive consumers to the malls -- a record \$7.92 billion was spent online during the holiday season -- it could create a backlash, Internet analysts say. "It ticks you off," says Dale Bodmer, 49, a computer programmer in Mason, Ohio. He was lured by free shipping to Amazon. But he paid for it after learning that free shipping takes at least two days longer than standard shipping -- and his gifts could miss Christmas.

Amazon, which popularized free shipping last year, clearly indicates which products offer free shipping, spokesman Bill Curry says. He says the No. 1 e-tailer has received few complaints about the offer. He would not disclose the percentage of shoppers who get free shipping. Online shoppers say getting free shipping is hard because of:

* Product exceptions. Amazon offers free shipping on orders exceeding \$25 for qualified products. But that does not include a long list of items, including toys, apparel, video games, baby products, oversized items and products carried by partners Target, Circuit City, Office Depot and J&R Music & Computer World. Such partners account for about 23% of Amazon's unit sales.

"The offer is so restrictive as to be meaningless," says Wendy Leibowitz, 40, a writer in Washington who will keep shopping online because of its convenience, bargains and savings from sales taxes. "Free shipping is a bonus," she says.

Buy.com's free-shipping option does not apply to 40% of inventory, and, like Amazon, it does not cover international orders. While products on Amazon and Buy.com that qualify for free shipping are clearly marked, consumers often don't find out that other products aren't free until they're checking out. "Few people know what they're getting into," says Brett Burney, 31, a Cleveland technology specialist.

* Price limits. Several sites require big minimum orders. Among them: Fashion site Forzieri.com, with a minimum of \$300; Musician's Friend, \$299; Linens 'n Things, \$150; and Gap.com, \$100.

* Deadlines. Amazon's free-shipping offer runs every day, but it set limits for Christmas. It said eligible gifts must be ordered by Dec. 12 to qualify for free delivery and arrive before Christmas. Others, including Buy.com, also imposed deadlines.

New Appreciation for Old Computers

Yesterday's computers, so often dumped for the next new model, have finally come to be treasured as historical artifacts.

And techies, known more for their skills than sentiments, are waxing nostalgic for vintage models from Apple to Zenith -- and paying good money for them.

"Most collectors are geeks, from kids to people who've retired, who share an interest in technology," said Sellam Ismail, a computer historian and consultant who owns more than 1,500 models and runs the semi-annual Vintage Computer Festival (<http://www.vintage.org>). "Some people do collect for money. People are trading them actively worldwide."

Prices are generally still low -- \$5 to \$100 for computers that originally cost thousands of dollars from 1971 to the early 1990s. These include the popular Tandy Radio Shack laptops, Kaypro desktops and "transportables" (which could weigh more than 35 pounds), and most personal computers.

However, on eBay (<http://www.ebay.com>) 125 items showed up in a search for "vintage computers," with asking prices as high as \$1,999. Values are steadily climbing and rare ones can be worth a fortune, especially if they are complete, in working condition, and come with related accessories and software.

For example, the Apple 1 -- designed by Steve Jobs and Steve Wozniak in a California garage and sold as a kit in 1976 for \$666.66 -- fetched \$25,000 at an auction in 2000. The sale included manuals, marketing literature, BASIC computer language on cassette, and other collateral material. Of the 200 Apple 1s made, so far only 31 have been identified by Ismail.

Prices soared during the dot-com boom, when high-profile collectors like Microsoft Corp. co-founder Paul Allen competed fiercely for scarce items, some of them intended for museums.

At an auction in 2000, Microsoft Chief Technology Officer Nathan Myhrvold paid \$70,000 for a relay rack, or a set of vacuum tubes, that belonged to one of the first digital computers, the ENIAC (Electronic Numerical Integrator and Calculator). The gargantuan mainframe computer, designed during World War II to compute bomb tables, is regarded as the great-grandfather of American computing and only remnants of it remain, scattered in different parts of the world.

Since the dot-com bust, prices have fallen back, with another Apple 1 selling online for \$14,000 last April. But values remain high for historically significant models, and soared in the past year when the only price guide of its kind, "Collectible Microcomputers" (Schiffer, <http://www.schifferbooks.com>), went from manuscript to print.

"There's limited data to draw upon, so it takes only a couple of sales to change that," said computer journalist Michael Nadeau, who wrote the book. For example, an IBM 5100, a 50-pound microcomputer released in 1975 with a proprietary operating system, sold recently for \$3,000, far above the previous range of \$300 to \$1,000.

Other breakthrough machines such as the Altair 8800 by MITS (Micro Instrumentation and Telemetry Systems) are worth \$2,000 to \$3,000 in good condition. In 1975, the computer cost \$439 for a kit and \$621 assembled.

Sphere I, the first desktop computer designed for businesses, is worth \$1,000 to \$1,500 in good condition, compared with \$1,345 (assembled) in 1975, Nadeau said.

However, common machines are worth much less, even if they are landmarks. The first IBM personal computer in 1981, the 5150, set the microcomputer standard for almost all manufacturers. But it is worth only \$50 to \$150 for the early 16K motherboard version. All later versions are valued at \$18 to \$65.

"People are concentrating on what they know. That drives a lot of prices now," Nadeau said. "The average collector won't pay a lot. They want it out of nostalgia or they work in a technical field and like to tinker with the systems."

Trading is active on the Classic Computer Mailing List (<http://www.classiccmp.org>), an online community that has steadily grown since 1997 from the United States and Europe to include the rest of the world.

As for future values, any computer with an unusual configuration or the early run of a new model could be collectible. These include certain portable systems, and hybrid notebook and pen-based systems that are coming out now.

Apple Macintoshes have an almost cult-like following, and the revolutionary Apple iMac, with its adjustable flat-panel screen perched on top of a hemisphere, is already an icon.

"There will be thousands around, but they changed the industry. You have to look at how likely it is that people won't hold onto a computer, and in 10 to 20 years what kind of impact it has made," Ismail said.

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